



Lessons Learned Summary

Bosnia: Operation Joint Endeavor¹

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Background.** *Lessons From Bosnia: The IFOR Experience* is the product of a collaborative study conducted by the Command and Control Research Program (CCRP), under the cognizance of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Information (ASD C3I) and the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), under the cognizance of the National Defense University (NDU). As the title suggests, the study focused on Operation *Joint Endeavor*, the NATO peace enforcement operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina to implement the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Accords, from December 1995 through December 1996. Eight authors contributed material to the book, which was edited by Larry K. Wentz.
- B. Relevance.** As the editor notes, *Joint Endeavor* was a first for NATO in many respects: “NATO’s first-ever ground force operation, its first-ever deployment ‘out of area,’ and its first-ever joint operation with NATO’s Partnership for Peace partners and other non-NATO countries, including the Russians (of note, all NATO countries and 18 non-NATO countries provided ground forces to the Implementation Force (IFOR).” As a peace operation, *Joint Endeavor* is not the first such operation conducted by U. S. Forces in the post Cold War world. However, it is the first such operation on the continent of Europe since immediately following World War II, and in light of the ongoing conflict in other areas of the former Yugoslavia, it is useful and relevant both as an area study and, perhaps, as a prelude to an expanded operation of the current one ongoing in the region.
- C. Key Results, Consequences, and Insights.** Largely as a result of the organizations sponsoring the study, *Lessons From Bosnia: The IFOR Experience* focuses on C4I-related lessons learned in *Joint Endeavor*, including such related fields as C2 structure, intelligence operations, information operations and activities, tactical psychological operations (PSYOPs), counterintelligence, and C4ISR systems and services. The study also has chapters on civil-military cooperation and the International Police Task Force. Accordingly, lessons learned are varied and not organized into any sort of coherent treatise arranged around the broader aspects of the conduct of the operation. Some of the more significant lessons on the peace operation include:
- Human relief workers (NGOs, PVOs, etc.) are the “main effort” in such an operation

- Warfighting and peace operations require different skills and capabilities. Military organizations need to adapt “go-to-war” doctrines and TTPs for peace operations where the “enemy” is ambiguous and the primary goal is stability, not destruction of an enemy force.
- The Information Age has arrived and significantly changed the way NATO and the military conduct operations:
 - E-mail replaces formal message handling systems
 - VTC will be used extensively for C2 and decisionmaking
 - Powerpoint is the medium of choice for presentations
 - Information sharing and collaboration are enhanced
- CI/HUMINT are the intelligence sources of choice for commanders
- An overemphasis on force protection among the U. S. units had a significantly adverse impact on relief/reconstruction operations in the northern sector.

The editor concludes that *Joint Endeavor* showed that “The NATO Alliance proved that it can be flexible and adaptable (in the post Cold War world) and showed that with clear political guidance, the operational military arm can accomplish tasks given to it by its political authorities.” Such a conclusion is reasonable; it is undeniably true that, to some degree, *Joint Endeavor*, and its sequel *Joint Guard*, have succeeded in “promoting a climate in which the peace process could continue to move forward ...”. The book is--unapologetically--enthusiastic about the U. S. military’s performance in a very complex and demanding operation.

Yet in spite of the operation’s acknowledged success, any *military* lessons learned, especially those related to C4I, must be tempered by the fact that there was *no fighting*. Perhaps this is the most important question not asked: how well would the enormously complex C4I structure have operated if one or more of the former warring factions (FWF) had decided to resume fighting? We may glean some insights into that question from Operation *Allied Force*.

II. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Command and Control Structure

- NATO should have defined the operation from the beginning in both civilian and military contexts. As in previous peace operations (OOTW), there is a tendency to underestimate civil requirements.
- Rules of engagement (ROE) should have been set at the NATO level, not just at the national level, for the operation.
- The designation of a contingency reserve force should have been set in the initial planning stages.
- Potential confusion and conflict between missions may result when national forces (U.S. Title 10) requirements conflict with NATO OPCON direction (e.g., force protection).

B. Intelligence Operations

- For peace operations, tasks need to be defined with a clear end state for meaningful IPB to occur.
- The Implementation Force (IFOR) Information Campaign had spotty success in adapting to the Bosnia consumer environment and countering the established Serb information campaign targeted against IFOR.
- There were too few military linguists to support the operation. It was necessary to use contracted linguist support.
- Low-tech as well as high-tech solutions had high payoff at the theater and tactical levels.
- Peace operation databases need to be more flexible than those used for conventional operations.
- Sensor-to-shooter intelligence and maneuver warfare-oriented intelligence did not provide a foundation for long-range analysis and did not accurately target the intentions of low-tech belligerents.
- The proliferation of new and prototype advanced technology systems at the analytic nodes, without additional manning, sometimes detracted from mission accomplishment and often increased the load on available resources.
- The division of tactical, theater (operational), and strategic has become less distinct, and planning staffs and commanders at all levels will have to learn how to deal with this new environment.

C. CIMIC: Civil Military Cooperation. Of particular interest is a table on Page 127 that compares the various national approaches to civil-military operations of the Russians, Americans, French, British and NATO.

- Ground commanders generally lacked a basic understanding of the role and value of CIMIC, which lead to misperceptions that CIMIC activities were contributing to mission creep.
- Prior to deployment, CIMIC operations were generally regarded as “rear area” activities, an orientation that had no relevance to Bosnia. Accordingly, CIMIC operations planning was under-emphasized in the pre-deployment phase.
- The early deployment of civil affairs personnel in a peace operation is an important, even vital, force multiplier. U.S. Army civil affairs personnel (mostly reservists) proved essential, but a delay in their deployment resulted in significant early problems, problems that were avoidable.

D. Information Activities. Public Information (PI) operations were primarily oriented toward the international media and gaining and maintaining international support for the operation. On the other hand, PSYOPs were primarily oriented toward shaping the local population’s perception in favor of IFOR.

- In peace operations, PI and PSYOPs can be employed as effective non-lethal “weapons.” For, example, the Commander, Multi-National Division Southwest (MND (SW)) often relied on press statements to pressure non-cooperative factions to comply with the DPA.
- In the Multi-National Division North’s (MND (N))’s sector, severe force protection rules seriously handicapped the public information officer’s ability to coordinate with outside organizations.

E. Tactical PSYOP Support to Task Force Eagle. Lessons learned here are particularly important to Marines who, in general, lack operational experience with PSYOP units. Key points include:

- For OOTW, it is extremely important to get PSYOPs planners involved early. PSYOPs planning tends to get overlooked until units arrive in country and face the reality of highly complex and ambiguous situations.
- PSYOPs not only serve to influence a target population, but PSYOPs personnel also act as a valuable source of intelligence, especially HUMINT.
- Restrictive force protection measures adversely impacted PSYOPs in Bosnia.
- Face-to-face communications between the maneuver commanders and leaders of the civilian populace or FWFs proved to be one of the most effective platforms for PSYOPs.
- Because IFOR troops provided the local population with the basic security needs they craved, the ability of soldiers to establish a rapport with the local population helped to establish the credibility of the IFOR.

F. Information Operations in Bosnia: A Soldier’s Perspective. For those concerned with tactical level OOTW operations of military units, these are the most interesting and useful insights in the book. The author, Col Kenneth Allard (USA Ret.) does a superb job analyzing the reality versus the perception of “information operations” at the brigade level and below in the U.S. Army’s 1st Armored Division (AD). Allard combines his superb understanding of C2 concepts with an experienced soldier’s view of operations at the lowest level to provide a very useful and insightful report on lower level operations. Additionally, Allard provides a rare, insightful view into the operational character of the Russian airborne brigade that operated “under” tactical control (TACON) of the 1st AD. Key observations/insights:

- Information flow, as measured by the transmission of data between strategic and theater level organizations was unprecedented in scope. However, the elaborate information flows between higher command levels did not always translate into better support for the warfighter, because the information revolution largely seemed to stop at division level. “Despite the techno-hype, subordinate brigades and battalions typically conducted operations much as they had 20 years before, with acetate covered 1:50,000 maps, outdated communications gear, and only those sensor or reconnaissance systems organic to ground units.”

- “The largest single command and control problem in Bosnia was the failure of the Dayton Accords to designate a single authority to synchronize the military, political, and humanitarian aspects of the mission. Not surprisingly, the humanitarian side of the mission consistently failed to keep pace with the improved security situation.”
- “On joint patrols, Russian junior officers were well organized and tactically proficient. However, they were often matter-of-fact about some things the United States takes more seriously: mission planning and briefings; delineation of specific objectives; integration of combined arms at the lowest levels; and after action reviews.”
- In regard to media and public affairs, the management of perceptions became an important and continuing mission. “The lesson learned: in peace operations, as in other politically charged conflicts, perception is the reality.”
- Computer viruses was a significant problem. “... conventional wisdom among U.S. units was that 50% of their personal computers suffered from viruses of one kind or another.”

III. “FOOT STOMPERS.” The book’s most profound insight was an indirect one: the centrality of human factors in OOTW. Throughout the book, the creativeness, ingenuity, and innovativeness of U.S. soldiers marks a recurring theme to success, from organizational workarounds, to dealing with ambiguous situations, to repairing and adapting equipment in harsh climates and situations not anticipated. As Allard again notes, “... the Bosnian experience should also remind us that our worship of technology in warfare must be tempered by a stronger sense of the human factor.”

IV. CONCLUSION. For a peacekeeping operation, which, by its nature, focuses on cultural and political, vice conventional military factors, *Lessons From Bosnia* is a bit skewed in its emphasis on conventional military C2, intelligence, and related technical systems. Nevertheless, it provides some excellent lessons and insights into the first non-Third World peacekeeping mission that U.S. forces have participated in since the end of World War II. In light of the ongoing conflict in Serbia, the book serves as an important and useful source of peacekeeping-related insights as the role of U.S. Armed Forces continues to expand in that intractably troubled region of Europe.

¹This summary was prepared based on the book *Lessons From Bosnia: The IFOR Experience*, by Larry K. Wentz, ed., National Defense University, Institute for Strategic Studies, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C., 1997.